

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 1139

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT MP
SUBJECT: MAURITIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: POST ELECTORAL
 ROUND-UP: DECEMBER 28

REF: PORT LOUIS 1133

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM ANNOUNCED AT A PRESS
CONFERENCE ON DECEMBER 27 THAT HIS LABOR PARTY WILL FORM THE
NEXT GOVERNMENT WITH THE SUPPORT IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE
MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PMSD). THE NEW CABINET
WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN TWO OR THREE DAYS. THE MAURITIAN
MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) WILL FORM THE OPPOSITION, WHICH
PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL BERENGER PROMISED WOULD BE "RESPONSIBLE
AND CONSTRUCTIVE." RAMGOOLAM SAID HE DOES NOT EXPECT NEW
ELECTIONS SOON. THE MMM HAS DENOUNCED THE PRIME MINISTER'S
DECISION TO POSTPONE CONVENING OF THE NEW ASSEMBLY UNTIL
FEBRUARY 15. A CLOSE ADVISER TO THE PRIME MINISTER PREDICTS
THAT LABOR WILL "MOVE LEFTWARD" TO COUNTER THE RADICAL
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APPEAL OF THE MMM. END SUMMARY.

1. AT HIS DECEMBER 27 PRESS CONFERENCE, PRIME MINISTER
RAMGOOLAM ANNOUNCED THAT HIS LABOR PARTY WOULD FORM THE NEXT
GOVERNMENT WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE PMSD. THE LATTER'S SUPPORT
WILL BE "WITHOUT STRINGS ATTACHED," HE SAID. HE WILL ANNOUNCE

THE NEW CABINET IN TWO OR THREE DAYS. RAM NOTED THAT IN THE 1967 ELECTIONS HIS PARTY HAD WON ONLY 23 SEATS WHILE THIS TIME THEY WON 25. (COMMENT: THIS FOOLS NO ONE, AS IN 1967 LABOR RAN IN A COALITION WHICH WON AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.) RAM SAID IT WAS THE OTHER TRADITIONAL PARTIES WHICH HAD LOST BADLY (TO THE MMM) AND HAD ALL BUT DISAPPEARED FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE. HE SAID 60 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION HAD SHOWN THAT IT DID NOT WISH AN "ABRUPT AND RADICAL CHANGE" IN MAURITIUS. ONLY THE LABOR PARTY, HE SAID, COULD PUT INTO PRACTICE, WITH THE GOOD WILL OF THE OTHER PARTIES, A SOCIALIST PROGRAM WHICH WOULD BENEFIT ALL MAURITIANS. A YOUNGER LOOK WOULD BE GIVEN TO THE GOVERNMENT, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.

2. RAM ANNOUNCED THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD PROCEED TO ADOPT MEASURES ALREADY PROMISED, SUCH AS FREE EDUCATION, A NATIONAL HEALTH SCHEME, BETTER TRANSPORT AND PARTICIPATION BY THE WORKERS IN MANAGEMENT OF ENTERPRISES. THE OPPOSITION WOULD BE CONSULTED IN ALL OF THIS. RAM SAID HE HAD HOPED FOR A MORE SOLID MAJORITY BUT WITH THE COOPERATION OF ALL HE WOULD BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH A MORE JUST AND PROSPEROUS SOCIETY. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS RAM SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT NEW ELECTIONS SOON (IT WOULD "MAKE A MOCKERY OF DEMOCRACY"), HE DID NOT EXPECT ANY LABOR MEMBERS TO DEFECT TO THE MMM (TWO HAVE BEEN RUMORED TO BE CONSIDERING DOING SO), HE HAD EXPECTED TO LOSE HIS MAJORITY IN THE ELECTIONS AND HE BLAMED THE SMALL PARTIES FOR HAVING CREATED CONFUSION AND DIVISIVENESS THAT HURT THE LABOR PARTY. HE TURNED ASIDE QUESTIONS AS TO WHETHER THE PMSD WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE GOVERNMENT AND WHETHER HE EXPECTED TO RUN IN A COALITION WITH THE PMSD IF NEW ELECTIONS ARE HELD.

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3. MMM SECRETARY GENERAL BERENGER TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE MMM PLANS TO PROVIDE A RESPONSIBLE AND CONSTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION IN PARLIAMENT. THE LABOR PARTY, IN CHOOSING TO HAVE THE PMSD SUPPORT IT, CANNOT EXPECT ANY "GIFTS" FROM THE MMM, HE SAID. THE MMM WILL PREPARE ITSELF FOR THE NEXT ELECTIONS AND NEXT MONTH WILL LAUNCH A "GENERAL OFFENSIVE" IN THE TRADE UNION AND POLITICAL FIELDS. (A MASS MEETING OF THE MMM IS PLANNED FOR JANUARY 9 IN PORT LOUIS AND THERE WILL BE GENERAL WORKERS FEDERATION RALLIES AS WELL NEXT MONTH.) THE MMM WILL CONTINUE ITS WORK OF MOBILIZING YOUTH AND "IDEOLOGICAL TRAINING" OF PARTY MILITANTS. THE GWF TRADE UNIONS WILL PRESS FOR HIGHER WAGES AND BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS. JUGNAUTH WILL BE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE ASSEMBLY AND DE L'ESTRAC WILL BE THE MMM WHIP. THE MMM DESCRIBES AS "SCANDALOUS" THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO POSTPONE THE CONVENING OF THE NEW ASSEMBLY UNTIL FEBRUARY 15, THUS NEGLECTING TO DEAL WITH ALL OF THE COUNTRY'S SERIOUS PROBLEMS.

4. IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR, D. BURRENCHOBAY, HEAD OF CIVIL SERVICE AND CLOSE POLITICAL ADVISER TO PRIME MINISTER, ANALYZED ELECTIONS RESULTS AS FOLLOWS. LIKE NUMBER OF COUNTRIES IN WESTERN EUROPE, MAURITIUS HAS A "HARD CORE LEFT" OF ABOUT 30 PERCENT OF ELECTORATE, MMM EXCEEDED ITS "NATURAL" CONSTITUENCY BY 10 PERCENT OF VOTE IN RECENT ELECTIONS, OBTAINING 40 PERCENT. LABOR GOVERNMENT WILL THEREFORE FOLLOW STRATEGY OF "MOVING LEFTWARD" BY PASSING MEASURES DESIGNED TO CUT INTO LEFTISH APPEAL OF MMM, IN EFFECT BY ADOPTING SOME OF ITS PROGRAM. IN NEXT ELECTIONS, WHICH BURRENCHOBAY DOES NOT EXPECT TO BE HELD UNTIL LABOR HAS HAD A CHANCE TO PURSUE THIS STRATEGY, LABOR SHOULD BROADEN ITS BASE IN THE CENTER AND CUT THE MMM DOWN TO SIZE (TO 30 PERCENT).

5. BURRENCHOBAY ADMITTED THAT HAD LABOR SUBSTITUTED SOME YOUNGER, MORE APPEALING CANDIDATES IN PLACE OF THE PARTY WAR-HORSES WHO HAD ANTAGONIZED THE VOTERS, THE PARTY MIGHT
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HAVE WON TEN MORE SEATS, TO MAKE A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. HE NOTED THAT HINDU SUPPORTERS OF LABOR HAD VOTED ALONG CASTE LINES, WHICH ACCOUNTED FOR DEFEAT OF SOME LABOR STALWARTS WHO SHOULD HAVE WON. FOR EXAMPLE, IN DISTRICT NUMBER 7, MMM PRESIDENT JUGNAUTH HAD NARROWLY DEFEATED COMMERCE MINISTER GHURBURRUN (BY 32 VOTES) FOR THIRD SEAT, WHILE THE OTHER TWO LABOR CANDIDATES WON FIRST TWO SEATS. LATTER TWO AND JUGNAUTH ARE ALL OF SAME CASTE, WHILE GHURBURRUN IS OF DIFFERENT CASTE. THIS FACTOR WAS PREVALENT IN OTHER DISTRICTS AS WELL.

6. COMMENT: BURRENCHOBAY'S REMARKS FORETELL A LEFTWARD SHIFT BY THE LABOR PARTY IN THE DIRECTION OF A MORE SOCIALIST, BUT STILL MODERATE, SOCIETY TO UNDERCUT THE RADICAL APPEALS OF THE MMM. THE LATTER WILL HAVE LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO COOPERATE IN THIS MOVE. THERE MAY BE A CONCURRENT LEFTWARD DRIFT IN FOREIGN POLICY, BUT THE DOMESTIC ARENA IS THE MORE LIKELY SCENE OF COMPETITION BETWEEN THE PARTIES. END COMMENT.

7. ON THE SUBJECT OF CAST VOTING, L'EXPRESS REPORTS THAT THE LABOR PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CONCLUDED, AFTER STUDYING THE ELECTORAL RETURNS, THAT CASTE VOTING BY THE VAISH CASTE HAD BEEN THE PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF THE LABOR PARTY'S DEFEAT.

8. IN A LETTER TO THE PUBLIC, PMSD LEADER DUVAL DRAWS SOME LESSONS FROM THE ELECTION RESULTS. ACCORDING TO DUVAL, THE PEOPLE ARE FED UP WITH THE RAMGOOLAM GOVERNMENT, ITS OLD FOGIES, CORRUPTION AND COMMUNALISM, AND THEY WANT CHANGE, AS PROVED BY THE NUMBER OF LABOR INCUMBENTS WHO LOST THEIR SEATS. THE PEOPLE DON'T WANT COMMUNISM, AND NO MORE THAN 36 PERCENT

WILL VOTE MMM. THE PMSD IS NO LONGER A PARTY THAT CAN FORM A GOVERNMENT, AND THERE WHOULD BE NO ILLUSIONS ON THIS SCORE. STILL, THE FIFTH OF THE POPULATION THAT SUPPORTED THE PMSD COULD CAUSE THEIDEATH OF MAURITIUS IF THEY WITHDREW FROM ECONOMIC ACTIVITY. SINCE THE ELECTIONS RESULTED IN AN IMPASSE, NEW ELECTIONS WILL BE NECESSARY. PMSD SUPPORTERS SHOULD STAY CONFIDENTIAL

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ORGANIZED SO THAT THEY, THROUGH A MINORITY, CAN GUARD THEIR LIBERTIES AND PRESERVE THEIR PLACE IN THE SUN. THEY SHOULD NOT PANIC NOR FLEE ABROAD. "BLOODY BUT UNBOWED", THE PMSD SHOULD REMAIN DETERMINED TO STRUGGLE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF FREEDOM, DUVAL COUNSELS.

9. FOLLOWING A MEETING OF ITS PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION, THE PMSD TOLD THE PRESS THAT RAMGOOLAM'S STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THA THE PMSD GIVES ITS "UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT TO THE LABOR GOVERNMENT" IS LACKING ANY FOUNDATION. (COMMENT: THIS PROBABLY MEANS THAT THE PMSD IS STILL JOCKEYING FOR POSITION AND WHAT IT OBJECTS TO IS THE DESCRIPTION OF ITS SUPPORT AS "UNCONDITIONAL.")

KEELEY

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